complete copy of the claims in "marked up" form showing the deletions and additions is provided on separate pages after this amendment and response.

CLAIMS IN "CLEAN" FORM

1. (Amended) A release control method for providing early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and platforms, the method comprising the steps of:
   a. providing an early development branch of the software system that is designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new features and platforms;
   b. receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;
   c. committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms into the early development branch; and
   d. using the early development branch, generating a new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms.

2. (Amended) The release control method of claim 1 comprising the additional step of repeating steps c and d on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles.

3. (Amended) The release control method of claim 1 wherein the pre-tested software module is received at a pre-integration branch that is separate from the early development branch, and wherein the committing step comprises committing pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms from a pre-integration branch into the early development branch.

8. (Amended) A system for providing early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and platforms, comprising:

a. an early development branch of the software system designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new features and platforms;

b. logic for receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;

c. logic for committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms into the early development branch;

d. using the early development branch, logic for generating a new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles; and

e. logic for generating said new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles.

9. (Amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the logic for committing comprises logic for committing pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms from a pre-integration branch into the early development branch.

14. (Amended) A product release method for controlling the release of software system code based on a fixed frequency, the method comprising the steps of:

a. selecting one or more features for inclusion in a new release of the software system code base, wherein a quantity of features selected will allow a next scheduled release of the software system code base to be completed at a required time;

b. testing the quantity of features selected in a plurality of business units;

c. providing the quantity of features selected to a pre-integration branch of the software system code base only when testing in the business units is successful;

d. testing the quantity of features selected in the pre-integration branch;

e. providing the quantity of features selected to a development branch only when testing in the business units is successful and in time to allow the next scheduled release of the software system code base to be completed in the required time.

15. (Not Amended) The method of claim 14 comprising the additional steps of:

a. completing testing of a modified software system code base in the development branch which contains the quantity of features selected and tested in the pre-integration branch; and

b. releasing the modified software system code base at the required time.

19. (New) A method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

20. (New) A method as recited in Claim 19, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of

software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.

21. (New) A method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature individually, and in combination with all other features;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

22. (New) A method as recited in Claim 19, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.

23. (New) A computer-readable medium comprising one or more stored sequences of instructions for providing release control using early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and platforms, which instructions, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to perform the steps of:

a. providing an early development branch of a software release that is designated for incorporation of support for new features and platforms;

b. receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested source code modules, wherein each of the pre-tested source code modules comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;

c. committing the pre-tested source code for new features and platforms into the early development branch; and

d. using the early development branch, generating a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms.

24. (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

25. (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 24, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.

26. (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature individually, and in combination with all other features;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

27. (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 24, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.

28. (New) A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

29. (New) A system as recited in Claim 28, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.

30. (New) A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature individually, and in combination with all other features;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

31. (New) A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.